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**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
**CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)**  
**SCHOOL & CHILDCARE**  
**TOOLKIT**  
**2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR**

**August 11, 2021**

Please note, future updates to this document will be indicated in orange text.

*New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Public Health Services*

## INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic began at the end of 2019, with the first case identified in New Hampshire on March 2, 2020. Since then, multiple waves have necessitated changes to the mitigation measures that control the pandemic and protect individuals and communities from COVID-19. As we enter the 2021-2022 school year, there exist multiple sources of guidance that K-12 school and childcare facilities should draw upon when making decisions about COVID-19 prevention measures. New Hampshire Department of Public Health Services (NH DPHS) considers the most appropriate guidance to be:

1. CDC [guidance](#) for K-12 schools and childcare programs
2. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [guidance](#) for K-12 schools
3. 2019-2020 New Hampshire Department of Education K-12 Back-to-School [Guidance](#)
4. NH [Universal Best Practices](#)
5. NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) interpretation of the above guidance provided during our [Educational Institution Calls](#) for K-12 schools and childcare partners

School and childcare COVID-19 prevention policies are intended to mitigate, but not eliminate the risk of COVID-19. Mitigation measures are especially important to bridge until vaccine can be provided to those younger than 12. Multiple studies have demonstrated that COVID-19 cases identified in school and childcare settings reflect community transmission, but these settings do not drive community transmission. Therefore, as community transmission of COVID-19 increases, there will be an increasing number of COVID-19 cases identified in school and childcare settings, so schools and childcare programs should implement COVID-19 strategies based on to community transmission to protect children, students, and staff.

Decisions about implementing prevention strategies should be primarily based on local community transmission of COVID-19 and whether COVID-19 transmission occurs within your facility, but also may be influenced by your facility's ability to implement multiple layers of prevention. This document also includes tools that a school nurse and administrative staff member may use to communicate best practices to students/children, staff, and families.

## EPIDEMIOLOGY

The epidemiology of COVID-19 in New Hampshire is constantly evolving. For the most updated summary, visit the State of New Hampshire's [COVID-19 Interactive Dashboard](#), which displays the most recent data available from the NH DHHS regarding cases, community transmission, vaccination progress, hospitalizations, deaths, and with demographic detail and county of residence.

## CASE INVESTIGATION AND REPORTING

Under New Hampshire State Statute [RSA 141-C](#), many communicable respiratory diseases and related positive laboratory results are reportable to NH DHHS. Additionally, state statute requires that any suspect outbreak, cluster of illness, or any unusual occurrence of disease that may pose a threat to the public's health must be reported to the NH DHHS, Bureau of Infectious Disease Control (BIDC) within 24 hours of recognition. If you are reporting a single case of COVID-19 in a student or staff member you may report by calling 603-271-4496 or by completing a [COVID-19 Case Report form](#) and faxing it to the number at the bottom of the form. Please notify NH DHHS of any cluster of new-onset COVID-19 symptoms among students or staff by calling 603-271-4496 (after-hours, call 603-271-5300 and ask for the public health professional on-call to be paged).

## 2. Promote vaccination against COVID-19

- Promote vaccination and help communicate about the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines in preventing infection, preventing spread of COVID-19 between people, and limiting the seriousness and duration of illness for people who develop COVID-19
- Highlight your town-level COVID-19 vaccination rates when communicating with staff, students, and families about the importance of achieving the highest levels of vaccination possible (see town-level data on the NH [Vaccination Data Dashboard](#))
- Work with your local Regional Public Health Network (see [contact list](#)) and/or with a local healthcare partner to set up school-specific clinics to offer vaccination to your community

## 3. Use face masks wisely

- Communicate with your community about the two different important purposes of face masks, including to
  1. Protect the person wearing the face mask, and
  2. Prevent spread of COVID-19 from the person wearing a face mask to others (i.e., “source control”)
- Schools and childcare programs can recommend or require facemasks. Decide with your community how to implement face masks to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 based on:
  1. [Level of NH community transmission](#) (reported at the County level with the cities of Manchester and Nashua separated out)
  2. Number of cases of COVID-19 occurring within your school or childcare facility, and the presence of [clusters/outbreaks](#)
  3. Your ability to implement other prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, cohorting, etc.). For example if you can separate children who are indoors by 6 feet, or activities are outdoors, masks may not be as important
  4. Level of COVID-19 vaccination within your school population, or within the surrounding town/city (see [Vaccination Data Dashboard](#)) – we recommend a goal of *at least* 80% of the population fully vaccinated
- Face masks are not recommended in most outdoor locations, but can be considered for high-risk situations or activities (e.g., close/physical contact sports)
- Recommended face masks for anybody who desires maximal protection for themselves or others, including people who:
  1. Have not been fully vaccinated
  2. Have a weakened immune system that makes them more susceptible to COVID-19, even after vaccination
  3. Wants to protect a household member who may be medically vulnerable or unvaccinated (i.e., to prevent the person wearing the face mask from picking up COVID-19 and bringing it home)
- Face masks are required to be worn on school buses and other forms of public transportation under the federal [CDC Order](#)

**5. Cohort (i.e., group individuals together)**

- Establish cohorts/groups of children, students, teachers, and staff and avoid mixing of groups to limit the number of people who come in contact with each other – cohorting is more important when it is difficult to maintain a controlled physical distancing between children, such as among young children in childcare
- Attempt more strict cohorting with smaller cohort sizes (ideally 20 people or less) in areas experiencing a “substantial” level of community transmission, or if there are frequent cases or clusters occurring within a facility

**6. Consider a Screening testing program (testing people without symptoms to detect COVID-19 early)**

- K-12 schools can implement asymptomatic screening programs for early detection of COVID-19 to prevent introduction and transmission of COVID-19. Note that screening testing is not currently recommended for childcare programs
- Review the CDC K-12 school [screening testing guidance](#)
- Review the NH [Safer at School Screening \(SASS\) Program](#) guidance
- Consider enrolling in the NH SASS program even if routine screening testing is not planned because SASS resources can be important to make immediate testing available for outbreak response
- Enroll in the NH SASS program by contacting: [SASS@dhhs.nh.gov](mailto:SASS@dhhs.nh.gov). The SASS contractor will help to provide the logistics of standing orders and consent for asymptomatic screening testing

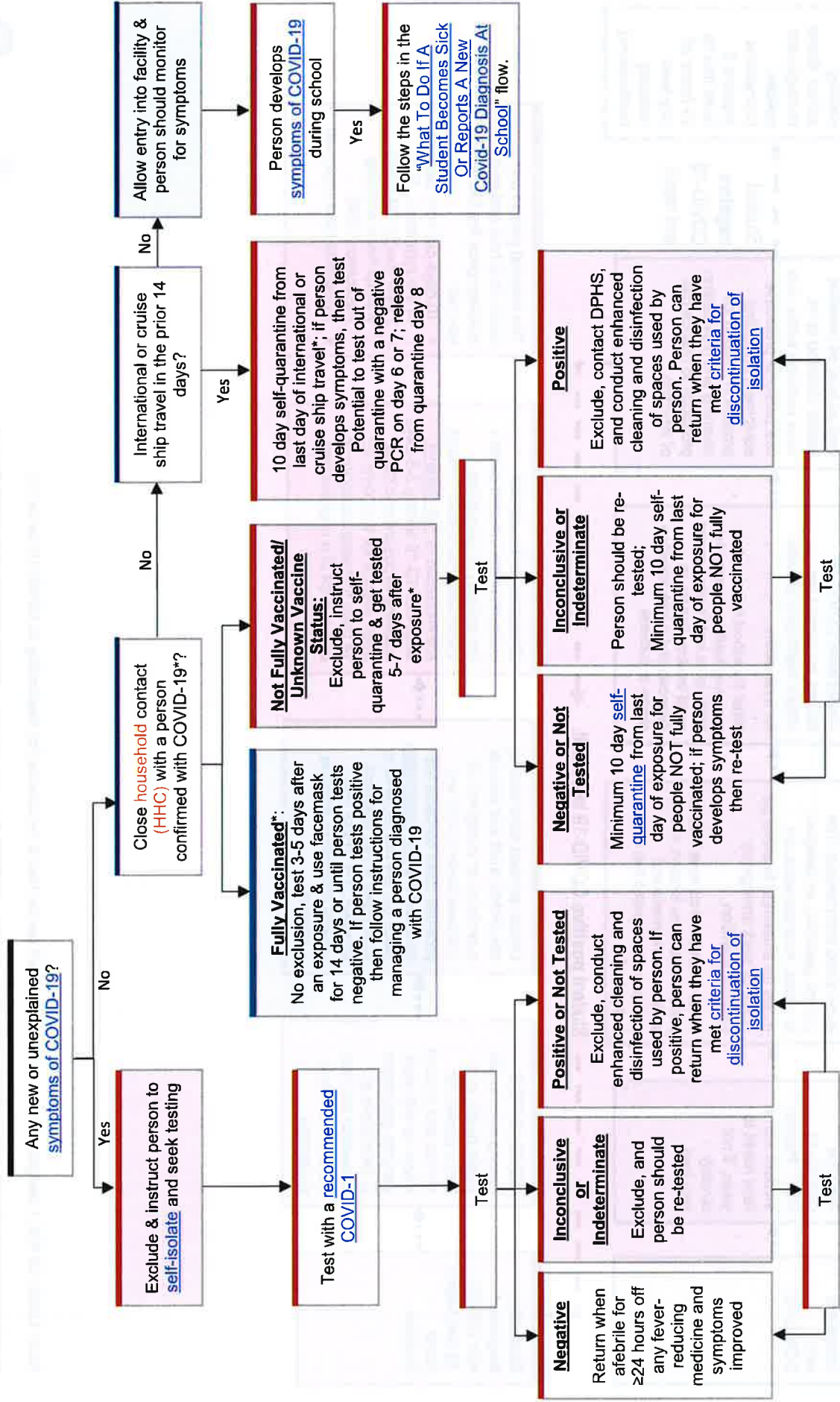
**7. Stay home when sick and get tested**

- Communicate with students, families, and staff about the importance of not coming to school or childcare with any new or unexplained [symptoms of COVID-19](#) that might be due to a viral infection, even with mild cold symptoms
- Such persons should stay home and get tested for COVID-19 (regardless of vaccination status) – testing sites can be found [here](#); home-test kits are also now available over-the-counter. [See page #9 for algorithm.](#)
- Implement sick leave policies that are non-punitive, flexible, and consistent with public health policies that allow ill staff to stay home
- Schools/SAUs can [request BinaxNOW antigen test cards](#) to test symptomatic persons identified at school (note: sick students and staff should not be sent to schools for testing, but should seek testing in the community)
  - Schools/SAUs need a CLIA certificate to test for COVID-19 at schools
  - CMS CLIA Application for Certification Form # 116: <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/CMS-Forms/CMS-Forms/Downloads/CMS116.pdf>
  - Consider other logistics of implementing diagnostic testing, including the need to obtain consent for testing from a parent/guardian, reporting results, and the need for a provider order to conduct testing

**8. Increase ventilation to reduce stagnant indoor air that may contain respiratory droplets**

- Increase room and building ventilation (i.e., replacement indoor air with outdoor air)
- See CDC guidance on [Ventilation in Buildings](#) and CDC guidance on [Ventilation in Schools and Childcare Programs](#)

# STUDENT & STAFF SCREENING ALGORITHM



\*The following people do not need to quarantine (see Checklist below for greater detail):

1. Persons who are 14 days or more beyond completion of COVID-19 VACCINATION
  2. Persons who are within 90 days of a prior SARS-CoV-2 infection that was diagnosed by PCR or antigen testing
- Household contact (HHC): any individual who lives and sleeps in the same indoor space as another person diagnosed with COVID-19 (either temporary or permanent living arrangement), leading to close contact and potential repeated exposure to the person with COVID-19. This includes situations where there may be temporary but prolonged exposure such as sleepover events, shared camp, cabins, vacation rentals, dorm living scenarios, etc.)

**RESPONDING TO PEOPLE WITH SYMPTOMS OR A DIAGNOSIS OF COVID-19**

- Review the prevention strategy implementation checklist above
- Exclude any staff, students, or children from the facility that have new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19 until they have either:
  - Tested negative and are afebrile for at least 24 hours (off fever-reducing medications) with other symptoms improving
- OR
- Tests positive for COVID 19 (or is not tested) and met criteria for [removal from home isolation](#)
- Notify NH DHHS of any cluster of students or staff with symptoms of COVID-19
- Notify NH DHHS about any person diagnosed with COVID-19 by PCR or antigen testing who was within the school or childcare facility while infectious (starting 2 days before onset of symptoms)
- Manage household contacts (HHCs) of persons with new and unexplained symptoms compatible with COVID-19, based on the symptomatic person’s COVID-19 risk factors and testing status:

Risk Factor?*	Viral Testing Pending? †	Action:
Present	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symptomatic person isolates pending test result.</li> <li>• HHCs quarantine pending test results.</li> </ul>
	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symptomatic person must remain on isolation until they have met CDC’s criteria for <u>discontinuation of isolation</u>.</li> <li>• HHCs quarantine for 10 days from last day of exposure.</li> </ul>
Absent	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symptomatic person isolates pending test result.</li> <li>• HHCs can remain in school/work as long as they remain asymptomatic, but if test is positive then quarantine.</li> </ul>
	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symptomatic person must remain on isolation until they have met CDC’s criteria for <u>discontinuation of isolation</u>.</li> <li>• HHCs can remain in school/work as long as they remain asymptomatic.</li> </ul>

\* Risk Factors for COVID-19 exposure include close contact to a person with COVID-19, International or cruise ship travel, or other high-risk activities as identified by an employer or public health in the 14 days before symptom onset.

† Appropriate COVID-19 viral testing includes molecular- (i.e., PCR) or antigen-based tests (antigen tests must be conducted within an appropriate time frame after symptom onset, as specified in manufacturer instructions). Antibody tests are not appropriate for diagnosing active infection.

† You do NOT need to stay home (quarantine) for 10 days if either of the following apply: (1) You are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and more than 14 days have passed since you completed your COVID-19 vaccine series. (2) You have previously tested positive for active COVID-19 infection (by PCR or antigen testing) in the last 90 days (if you had a previous infection that was more than 90 days ago, then you still need to follow all of these guidelines). However, you still need to monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19, practice social distancing, avoid social and other group gatherings, and always wear a face mask when around other

- Provide the student a copy of the Letter in Appendix D and a copy of [Letter to Providers Concerning COVID-19 Testing and Exclusion](#)
- Notifications to the school community: Communication is essential to provide parents and staff with information to make important health behavior decisions. Ensure staff, and families are aware of your school’s expectations and direct them to resources for isolation, quarantine and self-observation

	case-by-case basis with the DHHS investigator to identify risks for close contact exposure
K-12 school or childcare associated case	COVID-19 case (confirmed or probable) who is a student, teacher, or staff member physically present in the school setting or participated in a school sanctioned extracurricular† activity a. Within 14 days prior to illness onset or a positive test result OR b. Within 10 days after illness onset or a positive test result
Standardized K-12 school or childcare transmission definition	A subset of school-associated cases where the most likely place of exposure is determined to be the school setting or a school-sanctioned extracurricular activity.
A cluster in the school or childcare setting	Multiple cases comprising at least 10% of students, teachers, or staff within a specified core group* OR at least three (3) within a specified core group* meeting criteria for a school-associated COVID-19 case; with symptom onset or positive test result within 14 days of each other§ , AND NO likely known epidemiologic link to a case outside of the school setting.
An outbreak in a school or childcare setting	Multiple cases comprising at least 10% of students, teachers, or staff, within a specified core group* OR at least three (3) cases within a specified core group* meeting criteria for a probable or confirmed school-associated COVID-19 case with symptom onset or positive test result within 14 days of each other§ ; who were not identified as close contacts of each other in another setting (i.e. household) outside of the school setting; AND epidemiologically linked in the school setting or a school-sanctioned extracurricular activity.

\* A “core group” includes but is not limited to extracurricular activity†, cohort group, classroom, before/after school care, etc.) † A school sanctioned extracurricular activity is defined as a voluntary activity sponsored by the school or local education agency (LEA) or an organization sanctioned by the LEA. Extracurricular activities include, but are not limited to, preparation for and involvement in public performances, contests, athletic competitions, demonstrations, displays, and club activities. § For onset, use symptom onset date whenever available. If symptom onset date is unknown or if a case is asymptomatic, use specimen collection date for the first specimen that tested positive. The 14-day period refers to 14 days before the date of first symptom onset or first positive test sample.

**Action items for identifying and responding to a cluster or outbreak**

- Promptly notify the NH DHHS COVID-19 Congregate Settings Investigation Unit (CSI), if more than once case is identified at your facility
- Review the above prevention strategies checklist and work with your public health investigator to determine if there are steps that need to be taken to increase precautions (e.g., more strict cohorting, increasing physical distancing, implementing face masks until the outbreak is over)





- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Children may worry about themselves, their family and friends getting sick with COVID-19. Tips for talking to children about COVID-19 can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children.html>.

Our school works closely with the New Hampshire (NH) Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to monitor the newest information about COVID-19.

To learn more about COVID-19, please check these trusted resources:

- New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services: <https://www.covid19.nh.gov/welcome>
- United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Thank you for your support and partnership to keep our school healthy this year!

Sincerely,

*[School administrator's name and signature]*

- Avoid high risk locations, especially ones that are indoors and crowded, and where people are unable to maintain physical distance from others.
- If there is [substantial community transmission in your area](#), wear a cloth face covering that covers your mouth and nose to protect others when in public areas.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home and seek testing if you have a fever or are not feeling well.

To learn more about COVID-19, please check these trusted resources:

- [New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services: https://www.covid19.nh.gov/welcome](https://www.covid19.nh.gov/welcome)
- [United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact {NAME, TITLE, SCHOOL PHONE NUMBER}.

Sincerely,

[School administrator's name and signature]

Item	Frequency	Notes
Hand hygiene	Hand hygiene	Hand hygiene
Face coverings	Face coverings	Face coverings
Physical distancing	Physical distancing	Physical distancing
Screening	Screening	Screening
Testing	Testing	Testing
Isolation	Isolation	Isolation
Quarantine	Quarantine	Quarantine
Return to school	Return to school	Return to school
Communication	Communication	Communication
Emergency planning	Emergency planning	Emergency planning
Other	Other	Other

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Because COVID-19 is most commonly spread through respiratory droplets, we should all take the following precautions to prevent the spread of the disease:

- Get vaccinated, for those who are eligible..
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid high risk locations, especially ones that are indoors and crowded, and where people are unable to maintain physical distance from others.
- If there is [substantial community transmission in your area](#), wear a cloth face covering that covers your mouth and nose to protect others when in public areas.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home and seek testing if you have a fever or are not feeling well.

To learn more about COVID-19, please check these trusted resources:

- [New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services: https://www.covid19.nh.gov/welcome](https://www.covid19.nh.gov/welcome)
- [United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)

Sincerely,

*[School administrator's name and signature]*

### CLASS RULES

stay home if you feel sick

6 FT keep 6 ft from others

wash your hands with soap and water

use hand sanitizer if you can't wash your hands

cough or sneeze into a tissue or use your elbow, clean your hands after.

#### OTHER CLASS RULES

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[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

Students: Let's work together to stop the spread of COVID-19

### KEEP SPACE BETWEEN YOU AND OTHERS

**when outside**  
6 FT

**in the classroom**  
6 FT

**on the bus**  
try to skip a row if possible

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

Students: Let's work together to stop the spread of COVID-19

### DID YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?

stop

think

wash hands

#### ASK YOURSELF:

- Did I just go to the bathroom?
- Am I about to eat?
- Did I just eat?
- Did I cough or sneeze?
- Did I touch supplies or objects that other people have touched?
- Did I touch garbage?
- Did I touch my cloth face cover?

If you can't wash your hands, ask your teacher or another adult for hand sanitizer.

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

### DON'T LET YOUR GERMS GO FOR A RIDE

**COVER YOUR COUGHS AND SNEEZES**

with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow. If you use a tissue, throw it in the trash, and wash your hands right away.

If you can't wash your hands, ask your teacher or another adult for hand sanitizer.

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

### 10 things you can do to manage your COVID-19 symptoms at home

- Stay home from work and school. Don't get away from other people places. If you must go out, wear only one level of public transportation, including in taxis.
- Monitor your symptoms carefully. If your symptoms get worse, call your health care provider immediately.
- Get out and use hand sanitizer.
- If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider ahead of time and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19.
- For medical emergencies, call 911 and notify the dispatch personnel that you have or may have COVID-19.
- Cover your cough and sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- As much as possible, stay in a single room and avoid other people in your home. Also, avoid use of a common bathroom. If possible, if you need to go around other people in your home, wear a cloth face covering.
- Avoid close personal contact with other people in your household, like hugging, kissing, and handshaking.
- Clean all surfaces that are touched often, like counters, tables, and desks, and disinfect. Use household cleaning sprays or wipes according to the label instructions.

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

### Six Steps for Properly Cleaning and Disinfecting Your School

Protect Your School Against COVID-19

Properly cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects can help reduce and slow down the spread of the virus in your school or facility.

- Always wear gloves and other personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate for the chemical being used.
- Cleaning and disinfection products should not be used by or near students.
- Make sure that there is a designated worker for floor when using chemical products to prevent students or others from inhaling toxic fumes.

- Use an EPA approved disinfectant against COVID-19. Visit [www.epa.gov/826](https://www.epa.gov/826) to learn the EPA code with your smart phone to check EPA's list of approved disinfectants.
- Always follow the directions on the label. Check "use with" and "surface types" to find out where the product can be used. Pay close attention to "precautionary statements."
- Clean surfaces and determine how area will be disinfected. Clean surfaces with soap and water prior to disinfection. Thoroughly clean and sanitize frequently touched surfaces at least daily.
- Follow the specified contact time. Apply the product for a specific time or until the surface is dry according to the specific instructions on the label.
- Wear gloves and wash your hands with soap and water. Disinfect disposable gloves after each cleaning and disinfection. For reusable gloves, dedicate a pair to disinfecting surfaces to prevent the spread of COVID-19. After removing gloves, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Store chemicals in a secure location. Keep products tightly closed and store products in a secure area from students' reach and sight.

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

### Stop the spread of germs that can make you and others sick!

Wash your hands often

Cover your coughs and sneezes

Wear a mask

at least 6 feet

Get 3 COVID vaccine

Keep 6 feet of space when possible

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

### Cleaning and Disinfecting in School Classrooms

Cleaning and disinfecting can help by limiting exposure to germs and maintaining a safe environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reduce the spread of germs by keeping surfaces clean and removing excess of the maximum amount of germs.

**The Difference Between Cleaning and Disinfecting**

- Cleaning** reduces germs, dirt, and grime from surfaces or objects and usually by using soap and detergent and water to physically remove germs from surfaces.
- Disinfecting** kills or inactivates germs on surfaces or objects. Disinfecting agents work by using chemicals as described on labels after they have been properly cleaned.

**Which Disinfectant Products Should I Use?**

You can use any EPA-registered disinfectant against COVID-19. Visit [www.epa.gov/826](https://www.epa.gov/826) with your smart phone to check EPA's list of approved disinfectants.

**Where Should I Clean and Disinfect?**

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects within the classroom. Check compartments for products for use on electronic devices.

**Consider Cleaning surfaces and objects including but not limited to:**

- Classroom desks and chairs
- Tables and chairs
- Desktops, laptops, and keyboards
- Shared classroom materials and supplies
- Light switches
- Shared playground facilities
- Shared and nonshared books
- Disinfectants
- Shared electronics such as printers
- Other shared facilities and areas

**When Should I Clean and Disinfect?**

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily or before use by different students, with the use of physical barriers when possible, in rooms and shared transportation.

**Options for cleaning and disinfecting include:**

- 1) In the morning before students arrive
- 2) Between classes. If you use a change line or other barrier to separate students
- 3) Before and after each class
- 4) Before or after each recess or break
- 5) After students leave for the day

**Never mix cleaning and disinfecting products and avoid the use of vapors, fumes, and dust from products. Check the label for use directions and use appropriate PPE. Never use these products in areas where children or students from neighboring classrooms.**

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)